

David Boyd email

**From:** David Boyd  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 19, 2004 2:11 PM  
**To:** tcmuseum  
**Subject:** FW: Great site

After all these years (I got out of the army in 1974), I had a friend visit your post. He came back thrilled about the museum collection, especially the gun trucks. I mentioned to him that I had served on a gun truck in Vietnam and he decided to try and find my truck on your web site. He did locate "The Big Kahuna", pointed it out to me and I am just as excited about this as he was.

I served two tours in Vietnam from 1968 thru 1972. While serving with E Company 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 506th 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne I was wounded in both arms and legs. After returning to duty in 1970, I decided I would like to return to Vietnam. The injuries would not allow me to return to recon, so I was assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Company. It didn't take them long to figure out a grunt couldn't drive a truck, so I was assigned to the gun truck platoon. This was a perfect fit with my background in weapons. Names are hard for me now, but I do remember that at that time the 2<sup>nd</sup> Transportation at least 3 gun trucks. Sgt. Lee from Hawaii was our Platoon Sgt. And it was said he named "The Big Kahuna", we also had "The Outlaw" which was build exactly like The Kahuna, and we had "Maverick" as our maintenance gun truck. We ran a lot of convoys with "Blood Sweat and Tires", but I believe they were with another company. We worked out of Camp V. [Vasquez] with the 597th and I believe the 444<sup>th</sup>. Most convoys had gun trucks from different companies on each trip. King Cobra was on most convoys with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trans.

Your description of how gun trucks came along, how we got our weapons, trips across An Khe and Mang Giang Pass could not be more accurate. We were a group of, sometimes misfits or old grunts that fit like a glove when given the chase to ride a gun truck. There was a lot of pride in what we did. When our group was chosen to accompany the move up North, I believe in 1971, it was an honor to us. This trip took us through Hue, Da Nang, and the Northern most post that we had at the DMZ.

I have included a couple of pictures I had of "The Big Kahuna". I hope to visit your post soon and thank you personally for the great job you do with the museum. I would like to bring some of my pictures for your review. I only live a couple of hours away.

Thanks again:  
Sgt David R. Boyd

**From:** Killblane, Richard  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 24, 2004 9:29 AM  
**To:** David Boyd  
**Subject:** FW: Great site

David, I reread your email and noticed that you mentioned the move north in 1971. Evidently you participated in Lam Son 719/Dewey Canyon II. I want to know everything I can about trucks in those operations.

Do you remember when you moved north? Did you convoy as a company or were there other companies driving with you? How long did it take to get up there and where did you RON along the way? Did anything interesting happen along the way?

Where was your destination? What other TC companies were there? What convoy routes and destinations did you run?

Did the enemy increase his effort to ambush the convoys during this operation?

Thanks, Rich

**From:** David Boyd

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 24, 2004 2:19 PM

**To:** Killblane, Richard

**Subject:** RE: Great site

Thanks: I will need to rack my brain and memory to answer these questions. Some research into my pass will be needed and I will do my best and reply. For now, I can remember:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Trans. traveled as a company, but I cannot remember if another company came along at this time.
- We RON in Da Nang at a SeaBee camp and had steaks for my 1<sup>st</sup> time in Vietnam.
- We were set up in a camp near Hue and ran convoys north to Khe Sanh from a seaport in the Hue/Quang Tri area.
- We had very little contact during our trips to Khe Sanh, but evidence of ambushes was everywhere. I do not remember the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trans. losing any vehicles or personnel during this time.
- We did have a CO who was injured or killed by a hand-grenade during this time inside of our base camp.
- We came under mortar attack while unloading in a camp near Khe Sanh. My dog "Gunner" was killed in this attack. As with a lot of gun trucks, we had pets that traveled with us. We kept "Fred," a spider monkey, and "Gunner" as our pets.
- Our convoy went through Hue each day and I have pictures of the very large church that was a big part of Hue history.
- We also traveled past Camp Eagle on our travels and I sometime stopped by to talk to an old school friend who was with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne. Our truck was a big novelty to them as it would have been to me when I was in the 101<sup>st</sup>. I did not even know trucks like these existed when I was in Echo Company or that paved roads existed in Vietnam. I got permission to take my friend (Robert Smiley) out on my truck one day. He was amazed at the different Vietnam he saw on the road vs. the boonies. Almost got him in trouble when we did not make it back to his firebase before curfew.
- I believe I remember running supplies to Firebase Vandergrift also. Maybe even Bastogne, but I am not sure.
- We earned a Line Haul patch and certificate while on this mission. I will pull it out and check the dates. I believe the whole operation only lasted 30 days.

Operating out of the Qui Nhon area. (Camp V. I call it because I cannot remember how to spell the name.)

- We ran convoys almost daily to An Khe, Pleiku, or South to Tuy Hoa. Your site pretty well tells the ambush stories across both the An Khe and Mang Yang Passes. We also got ambushed going to Tuy Hoa one day and that's the day we ran across a quad fifty gun truck. (2 ½ ton with anti-aircraft guns mounted).
- I believe the worst feelings my crew had about Vietnam occurred during a convoy to Tuy Hoa Air Force Base. A short story of this was.
  - We got ambushed that day and lost two trucks. Not sure about personnel.
  - We were hauling mostly PX supplies.
  - All weapons had to be removed from each truck before we could enter the Air Force base which was a big pain and did not happen anywhere else.
  - We RON in an old hanger and believe it or not, we burn trash in 55 gallon barrels to keep warn.
  - We were not allowed to use any base facilities. (PX, EM clubs, etc).

All of the above things did not set well with any gun truck or repair truck due to the fact that we had been ambushed bringing PX supplies to the Air Force personnel. Trucks that were with us that day, as I remember were, The Outlaw, King Cobra, Maverick, and I believe Blood Sweat and Tires. I have pictures I must check. I also remember a Sgt. Ritchie who was on the Maverick. As I go back through my pictures and letters, I'm sure I will remember more. I had no idea I had forgotten so much, but it's been a long time since I have talked about this subject. I'm ashamed I can't remember the names of my crew. We were very close back then and I am hoping this will come back. My last driver was named Mooney and he was from the Washington, DC area.

Our company was disbanded and I found out they were looking for an RTO to work out of the An Khe base camp. I took the job and worked as a relay radio operator for the last couple of months that convoys were run across An Khe and Mang Yang Pass. Two of us were put in a state side single wide trailer and manned a radio 24 hours a day to relay radio messages from, gun ship's to spotters to MP roadrunners to gun trucks, etc. These people worked off of different radio channels most of the time and we had to get convoys help ASAP when needed. At that time, there were no more Americans at the An Khe Base. The worst problem we had was Arvin's stealing our laundry off of the line. I was at this base one day when a MP roadrunner stopped by, gave me 30 minutes to pack and explained he was the last vehicle that could take us to Qui Nhon. It was over.

I'll be in touch: My home e-mail is [email address removed]

David Boyd

**From:** Killblane, Richard

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 24, 2004 2:37 PM

**To:** David Boyd

**Subject:** RE: Great site

David, That's more than I expected you to remember. It was Camp Vasquez.

When did you arrive on your second tour and when did you leave?

What was life like in the 2nd TC before it was inactivated? Where did all the drivers go? How did they feel about it? Where did the trucks and gun trucks go?



Thanks, Rich

**From:** David Boyd

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 24, 2004 4:23 PM

**To:** Killblane, Richard

**Subject:** RE: Great site

My DD-214 says I arrived in Vietnam for my 2<sup>nd</sup> tour on 9/2/1970 and departed 1/29/1972. My original entry date was 4/23/1968 and my final discharge date was 2/22/1974.

I received my injuries while serving with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne from a booby-trapped hand-grenade on 12/19/1968. Both arms and legs were broken. I spend an extended stay at Portsmouth Naval Hospital and returned to Vietnam shortly after put on light duty at Fort Bragg in 1970. I refused a medical discharge in 1970 because they were going to pay me 50% based on my pay grade. (Not much)

I can answer some of the questions about the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trans.

Life to me was great and I believe I can also state that the men who served with me in the gun truck platoon, while not really wanting to be in Vietnam, were very positive about being in the gun truck platoon. I couldn't ask for better after coming from a leg platoon (Recon) of the 101<sup>st</sup>. I had hoped to return to my old outfit, but accepted my job in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trans. As stated before, it didn't take the 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. or company commander long to figure out I was more of a hazard driving a truck than a help. SSgt. Lee had an opening in the gun truck platoon, and with my infantry background, I had no problem fitting in. My company commander (Forgot his name) called me in and asked about my training and background and made it sound like I would be a great help to SSgt. Lee. But it worked both ways. Another thing my CO did was ask about what happened to me. I explained about the booby-trap and gun shot wounds during the ambush and he asked about a purple heart or any other metals. I had not received any metals or they had not caught up to me. He somehow pulled off a purple heart for my earlier injuries and gave it to me in a company formation. He also tried to get me a CIB, which to this day I would love to have, but he was told I did not have the required time in combat. (I got hurt before the 90 days cutoff while serving in the field.

Life in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trans: Never Boring:

Each day one gun truck was assigned the task of escorting the water truck down to Qui Nhon, (or in that area) to get drinking water for our base. Also a gun truck would escort bob-tails to the ammo dump or docks to pick up loads for delivery. We did this 6 days a week and rested one.

Gun trucks not assigned escort duty would leave camp around 05:00 each morning and go to our weapons test range. After weapons test, we would wait for trucks to arrive for convoy staging. We always knew the night before where we would be going the next day. An Khe was a regular trip while the 4<sup>th</sup> [Infantry Division] was still up there. Pleiku remained a regular trip throughout my tour. Bridges on QL-19 were guarded by South Koreans. This, I have been told, made our trip to An Khe Pass pretty safe. Going up the pass was a different story as you know.

Our worst ambush on An Khe Pass happened [on 1 April 1971] while we were escorting a very large number of Korean civilian [Han Jin] trucks. This also almost lost me my job as NCOIC of the Big Kahuna". The convoy was so large that the lead jeep was almost over the Pass before the rear jeep (Lt. Flint) started up the pass. We had gun trucks about every 15 vehicles. I was the 1<sup>st</sup> gun truck closest to the front. The ambush started about 5 trucks back when a RPG hit one of the civilian trucks. I told Mooney, my driver, to pull out of line (to the left) and back up to the disabled truck. This allowed the convoy to continue over the pass. As we backed up, the front of the convoy got hit, but continued to move. The driver of the disabled truck came running up the hill, tried to open the rear hatch, (we let him in) and we took off up the hill to get him medical help. All this time we had all three fifties going along with an M-79. King Cobra was behind me and in the middle of everything, so were The Outlaw, Maverick, and a couple of more. After dropping the Korean at the top of An Khe Pass, we drove back down the pass to try and help. We passed The King Cobra and the rest of the convoy coming up, went as far as needed to turn around, (Not easy on An Khe Pass) and rejoined the convoy. I am not sure of losses that day, but we got a good body count from the South Korean Army that went into the ambush zone later. How I almost got in trouble: It was reported to our CO that we had run from the ambush and we got called in on this. I can see how someone may have thought this when they saw us going over the top of An Khe Pass. When all was said and done, and we explained about the injured man needing help, coming back into the ambush, (which was against the rules), using all but two cans of fifty ammo and having to reload before going over Mang Yang Pass, things were patched up. We didn't even know about the charge until we had RON'd in Pleiku and returned to camp the next day. I never heard about this incident again, do not know who made the charge, and believe it went away. It was never talked about again in the gun truck platoon. We were too proud to do something like that. I do know that King Cobra had some 51 cal. holes in its body from that ambush.

2<sup>nd</sup> Trans breaking up: I do not know much: Stories were being done back then on gun trucks by a reporter of some type. Someone met with The King Cobra crew and my crew to get our stories about each truck. It was rumored at that time that both the King Cobra and The Big Kahuna would be put in a museum. They would be loaded on a ship down in Qui Nhon. A lot of the guys were sent home at that time. I was told by an MP friend of mind about the RTO job in An Khe and jumped on it, losing contact with most of my friends. I did not want to leave Vietnam at that time with a job still left to do.

I did not help build "The Big Kahuna". Staff Sgt. Lee did. He was from Hawaii and I have always been told he named the Kahuna (Witch Doctor in Hawaiian). A shortage of steel plate, shortage of time, and availability of APC's down at the water front, made the APC gun truck hit the road quicker and with less labor in the motor pool. You already know we (and I had to do this) could not get weapons in a transportation company except for perimeter guard, so we managed to secure all of our weapons through a five finger discount. As with other supplies we needed, hauled, but could not get, we got most through "Combat Lost", trading with gunship crews, etc.

We traded and got our 1<sup>st</sup> mini-gun in 1971. We tried it on a jeep with trailer and found out the mini-gun would turn the jeep over if fired from the side. I believe we mounted the mini-gun on The Maverick or Blood Sweat and Tires. (Not an APC gun truck)

Going home was great for most people, but gun truck crews were a little disappointed about the break up. I was extremely disappointed because I felt we were such a good team and still had work to do. I still feel that way. I am not sure, but this disappointment may be why I have not tried to contact anyone in all this time. I still speak with the man (Charles Williams) who was wounded with me on 12/19/1968, but have never tried to contact any gun truck crews. Hope that will change.

I had mentioned to friends that my gun truck was in the museum in Fort Eustis. I believed this from the information we were given in Vietnam when we broke up. I never went to the museum to find out. After talking to my friend (boss) and looking at your internet, I know now that my truck did not make it back. While that's a disappointment, I now have a resource to at least talk about the few and proud people who served on gun trucks.

Thanks: I'll keep remembering  
David Boyd

**From:** Killblane, Richard  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 25, 2004 11:13 AM  
**To:** David Boyd  
**Subject:** RE: Found something

Pretty good. I had seen it before but there was not a lot of narration for this to be of much use. His caption on the photos makes sense when read with your narration. One photo has you firing a .50 on Maverick. Is he mistaken about which gun truck it was or how did you end up on the Maverick?

It sounded like your CO was interested in his people. Why did someone frag him?  
Thanks, Rich

**From:** David Boyd  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 25, 2004 1:17 PM  
**To:** Killblane, Richard  
**Subject:** RE: Found something

Because of my background, Sgt. Lee would have me check any weapons that were giving anyone problems. I am not sure, but I must have been testing the weapons, because I only served on the Kahuna. It really was not unusual for any personnel on any of our gun trucks to fire each others weapons while on the test fire range. We especially did this when we got our hands on speed barrels for our fifties. These barrels would make the fifty fire almost twice as fast, but due to lack of barrel support, it would shake the rivets loose. We somehow got a five finger discount on a group of these. We also loved to test the mini-guns.



I could not reach John Brown on his e-mail. As I read closer and looked at the picture closer I remember John as being one of my gunners. You'll recognize him in the picture I sent (#6).

I'm glad he mentioned the helicopter and the gun truck. I had told a few friends about this years ago and it was a little bit unbelievable to them. It did happen, but not very often. We usually had a one man helicopter as an escort just before we entered the An Khe Pass. (Depending on the weather). We had direct radio contact with him and after we lowered our antennas, he would come down close enough to get a beer. (I don't remember him ever getting a soda).

He was also right about the rear jeep getting hit, but I do remember about the driver a few days later. I believe Lt. Flint was in the jeep.

Our CO was above and beyond good. He did everything possible to look after his drivers, crews, officers, etc. No one knows what happened to cause the incident, but I do know it happened. I just cannot remember a lot about it. We did have a small problem at Camp Vasquez before heading up North. This involved some of our minority people refusing to go out one day. They were in the EM club and refused to come out. Our CO lined our gun trucks up in front of the club and convinced them they were going to drive. Again, this was a small incident that as far as I know never went beyond our camp and I cannot remember having another problem of this sort. Maybe someone else will remember.

He also had a picture of Sgt. Lee. He was our platoon Sgt. and did not go out on convoys very often. I did not realize we were the only or one of the only companies that had a gun truck platoon. I guess I assumed all companies worked that way. I believe our gun truck platoon had around 30 people.

I would like to contact John Brown, but cannot seem to get his address, e-mail, etc.

Thanks:

David Boyd